areas of beneficiation of thermal coal, coking coal, coal fines recovery, waste coal utilization, underground coal gasification, coal mine methane recovery, extraction of coal from steep seams etc.

Under Indo-EU coal working group it is proposed to take up a project on coal quality management for improving coal beneficiation techniques.

Coal blocks allotted to private companies

2886. MS. MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the number of new coal blocks have been allotted to private sector companies during the last two years for mining; and

(b) the names of the corporate sectors to whom the land has been allotted in acres, period of lease and conditions of allotment such as social sector obligations for the area, jobs for the locals, compensation for the displaced etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) 27 coal blocks have been allocated to private sector during the last two years for mining.

(b) The Central Government does not allot land to any coal block allocatee. However, it acquires land under the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition & Development) Act, 1957 for the Central Public Sector companies.

Import of coal

2887. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is projected to import about 44 million tonnes of coal this year, despite the fact that the country is sitting on indicated reserves of a whopping 252 billion tonnes of coal and proven reserves of 95 billion tonnes;

(b) whether it is a fact that the huge amount of coal imports point to the inability of Government owned Coal India Ltd. (CIL) and Singareni Collieries to exploit the country's natural resources; and

(c) if so, whether Government have made any investigations in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Indian coal, by virtue of drift origin, has high ash content and reserves of low ash content coking coal and non-coking coal is very limited in the Country and therefore, there is shortage of coking coal and low ash thermal coal which has to be imported.

Haphazard mining in Meghalaya

2888. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the town Ladrymbai in Meghalaya is sitting on a rabbit warren of crisscrossing tunnels due to haphazard mining in the town;

(b) whether it is also a fact that in the absence of a developmental plan, supportive infrastructure, knowledge and skills, communities here have engaged in uncontrolled gouging of the earth; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to prevent the social disruption and environmental devastation at Ladrymbai in Meghalaya?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Preference to big companies

2889. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO:
SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:
SHRI AJAY MAROO:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would extend preferential treatment to big firms in the matter of allotment of captive coal mines;

(b) if so, the details of the policy;

(c) the reasons for deliberately being harsh to small units therefor;

(d) whether a preferential policy would create monopolies, which are sustained by Government owned mines; and

(e) the steps proposed to review the policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) to (c) In allocation of coal blocks, the Government